

1970

Discipline in Middletown Friends Meeting, 1755-1770

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<https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-3bbx-cc58>

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DISCIPLINE IN MIDDLETOWN FRIENDS MEETING

1755 - 1770

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

By

William H. Toner, Jr.

1970

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APPROVAL SHEET

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the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to consider the way Quakers in Middletown Meeting (Pa.) disciplined wayward members and to learn the types of offenses most often committed by the deviants. The scope is confined to the period from 1755 to 1770.

Quakers used a lengthy process of discipline which often took years to conclude, allowing the accused member many opportunities to show innocence or repentance. Beyond the Monthly Meeting, the accused was permitted to appeal the judgment to higher Meetings of wider membership.

Offenses mentioned most frequently in Middletown Meeting records include: drinking, fighting, and "crimes" related to marriage regulations and sexual conduct. Military service, use of judicial oaths, and violations of Quaker rules regarding slaveholding, which are considered traditionally Quaker "crime," did occur among Middletown members but were rare compared to other forms of misconduct.

Over fifty members were disowned by Middletown Meeting in this fifteen-year period. Less than one tenth that number challenged their disownment through appeals to higher Meetings. The majority of disowned persons accepted expulsion with little apparent concern, indicating a weak spiritual attachment to the principles of Quaker organization and faith.

DISCIPLINE IN MIDDLETOWN FRIENDS MEETING

1755 - 1770

INTRODUCTION

Middletown Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends is located in the Township of Middletown, Bucks County, Pennsylvania. The present Middletown meetinghouse stands in the town of Langhorne, where it was constructed in the late eighteenth century. However, as an organized Monthly Meeting of Friends, Middletown has its origins in the year 1684, two years after a small group of Friends first held regular meetings for worship in private homes.¹ Until 1706 Middletown used the name Neshaminy Monthly Meeting because it was located near the Neshaminy Creek which flows across the lower part of Bucks County and empties into the Delaware River.²

According to a late Bucks County historian, William W. H. Davis, most of the eighteenth century inhabitants of Middletown Township were either immigrants or descendants of immigrants from England who arrived in the County after William Penn received title to what is now Pennsylvania.³ Bucks County has always been noted for its rich, fertile land, and most of the colonial population were primarily engaged in agriculture or related employment. A few colonists in lower Bucks turned from farming to operating water-powered mills constructed along Neshaminy Creek before 1750.⁴ The occupations pursued in colonial America were well represented in the area around Middletown.

Since this will be a study of Middletown Monthly Meeting from 1755 to 1770, only the persons who were members of that Meeting are important here. Specific information about Middletown's membership is very difficult to obtain. The Meeting's records do not include membership lists per se. However, by taking names from manuscript papers and the minutes of the Men's and Women's Monthly Meetings one would estimate roughly that from one hundred and seventy to two hundred persons held membership at Middletown between 1755 and 1770. This does not mean that the membership for any single year was that large since some persons were joining while others were moving away from the Meeting continually. Any analysis based upon the number of Meeting members would be misleading to some degree.

By studying Middletown Meeting records, Davis' History of Bucks County, and Jane W. T. Brey's genealogical study of families of lower Bucks⁵, one can form an impression of the kind of people who belonged to Middletown Meeting in the decade before the American Revolution. The economic and social status of Middletown Friends was quite diverse. The Meeting included farmers (probably the largest element), mill-operators, storekeepers, large landowners, small landowners, local government officials, slaveholders, and many other types not clearly mentioned in the records. A more definite description of the composition of Middletown Meeting must remain the object for another study.

In studying Middletown Meeting the emphasis has been placed on the conduct of colonial Friends and the process by which the Meeting disciplined its unruly members. What follows here is an examination of the manner in which some Middletown Friends deviated from the norm established for Quaker conduct by the wider community of Friends. Furthermore, this is an attempt to describe how the Society of Friends in general and the Monthly Meeting in particular handled its disorderly members. The actions of deviant Middletown Friends and the response of the Meeting to their conduct may have something to tell about the problems of Pennsylvania Quakers from the beginning of the French and Indian War to the decade of the Revolution. There is no reason to assume necessarily that all Quaker meetings in mid-eighteenth century Pennsylvania experienced the same problems faced by Middletown; however, there is also no obvious reason for believing that Middletown was peculiar among meetings of this period.

In the account that follows no proper names will be given for Middletown Friends. There are two reasons for this. This is a study of Quaker misbehavior and Meeting discipline, not of individuals. Secondly, there is no reason to embarrass descendants of Middletown Friends by including their ancestors in a study of Quaker misconduct. The purpose of this examination does not require reference to specific individuals; the problem under consideration is the nature of Quaker "crime and punishment."

CHAPTER I

THE STRUCTURE AND PROCEDURES OF QUAKER DISCIPLINE

The Religious Society of Friends, commonly called the Quakers, is and always has been a very democratic religious sect which allows maximum participation of the individual member in the decision-making process. The democratic nature of Quaker organization stems from the principle of the Inner Light. The Quakers believe that there is "that of God in every man," a part of the divine spirit in all human beings regardless of their particular stations in life. Their belief in the Inner Light made a professional clergy unnecessary and even undesirable for seventeenth century Friends. The Inner Light, making all men potential sources of God's inspiration, eliminated any Quaker acceptance of a clergy that would claim greater authority over laymen in spiritual matters. Believing that all men can know the will of God if they follow the Inner Light, early Quakers built their organization along egalitarian lines.

Despite the egalitarian nature of Quakerism the Society has never been without authority and order from its origins over three centuries ago. In the first decades of the Quaker movement in Restoration England George Fox, considered to have been the founder of the faith, and other early leaders fostered the development of a system of Meetings to act as the government of the religious society.¹ The developing Meeting system was able to

prevent the splintering of the sect which might have resulted from the belief that all men could be guided by divine inspiration. The Meeting system was carried to Pennsylvania with the migrating Quakers from the English realm.

The basic unit in the Meeting system is the Monthly Meeting, the name of which refers to the meeting for business held once a month by a local congregation of Friends. The business or Monthly Meeting is set apart from the meetings for worship which are held on first-days (Sundays). The Monthly Meeting handles the mundane affairs of the spiritual group, matters such as care of the meetinghouse, acceptance and transfer of members, recording of births, marriages and deaths, and punishment of disorderly members.²

Above the Monthly Meeting is the Quarterly Meeting which convenes every third month of the year. Representatives from all Monthly Meetings in a defined geographical area attend Quarterly Meetings. Bucks Quarterly Meeting, in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, includes Middletown Monthly Meeting, the object of this study. The Quarterly Meeting coordinates policies of its Monthly Meetings and acts as liaison between Monthly and Yearly Meetings. The Quarterly Meeting will assist also in settling disciplinary problems that cannot be resolved by the Monthly Meeting alone.³

Although there are national and international Meetings today, the Yearly Meeting is still that body which holds the greatest authority over the individual Friend. It is an annual

assembly of delegates chosen by all Quarterly Meetings in a specified region of the country. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting encompasses all Quarterly Meetings in eastern Pennsylvania and parts of New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland. Ultimately, the Monthly Meeting must look to the Yearly Meeting for advice and assistance. The function of Yearly Meeting is similar to that of subordinate Meetings; however, because it represents a wider cross-section of Quaker opinion Yearly Meeting decisions are of greater consequence. At the conclusion of a Yearly Meeting, which lasts several days, reports of decisions and new policies are sent to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings.

"Official" Quaker attitudes and policies in relation to specific ideas and practices are established by Yearly Meeting; the "rules" of the Society are worked out on that level and passed down to lower Meetings. Periodically the Yearly Meeting reconsiders its rules upon the recommendation of lower Meetings and prepares a Book of Discipline which describes any changes made in the Quaker position. In the eighteenth century such Books of Discipline, or compiled rules of order, were prepared in manuscript form and sent around from Meeting to Meeting to be copied and recopied by individual Friends.⁴ Although they are now printed and published for distribution, these Books of Discipline still describe Quaker policy and procedure and are used as handbooks, providing guidelines for conduct in private and public matters.

Under the guidance of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Middletown Monthly Meeting subscribes to its Books of Discipline.

In the years 1755 to 1770 Middletown Meeting followed the rules of procedure found in the 1719 and 1762 Books of Discipline.⁵ While many of the policies of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting have naturally changed since 1762 the basic procedures for Meeting disciplinary action have remained essentially intact for over two hundred years.

In the application of Quaker rules the officers of the Monthly Meeting play a very significant role. Every Meeting from Monthly to Yearly has a clerk. Although the clerk is "theoretically a recording officer," he customarily presides at the Monthly Meeting and has a vital role in the decision-making.⁶ The clerk must also prepare the written minutes, certificates, and other official papers which he signs for the Meeting. Although the clerk is usually chosen for a one year term, the Middletown Men's Monthly Meeting retained the same clerk from 1750 to 1777.⁷ His tenure certainly indicates his influence and respect with the Meeting.

The overseers are officials of the Monthly Meeting who hold their positions for a term of several years. An overseer holds his office on the basis of his personal conduct and others' confidence in his judgment. As a standing committee on the life of the Meeting the overseers carry out numerous functions, from approving new members to providing for care of the meetinghouse. One of their primary responsibilities is "enforcement of discipline."⁸ The advice and observations of the overseers greatly influence the position of the entire

Meeting. With some understanding of the roles of clerk and overseer it is now possible to consider the actual process by which the individual Friend may be disciplined for un-Quakerly behavior.⁹

Every member of the Meeting is responsible for the conduct of other Friends. It is his duty to report violations of Quaker rules to the Monthly Meeting after speaking with the disorderly person; however, such reports are usually made by the clerk or the overseers who observe individual members more carefully. When the report has been presented, the Meeting must determine how to make the accused aware of his disorder and how to rehabilitate him.

After the report has been made, the accused Friend is required to explain his actions if he is present. If he denies the charges, the clerk appoints a committee to investigate the matter and report at the following Monthly Meeting. If the charges are accurate, the Meeting must decide how to deal with the accused. The purpose of Quaker discipline lies beyond simple punishment; Friends try to show the individual why such misconduct is unbecoming for a Quaker. The goal is repentance, not punishment.

The Meeting listens to all testimony in the case, and all members are permitted to express their opinions. The clerk is extremely important at this stage because he must weigh the opinions expressed, bring opposing views together, and produce a suitable and acceptable solution to the problem. In Quaker terms the clerk must determine the "sense of the Meeting."

There is no voting in Monthly Meeting, so the clerk's ability to evaluate the opinions of other members and uncover an applicable means of dealing with the problem under discussion is crucial to the success of the procedure.

If the accused member is found guilty of deviating from Quakerly conduct, he is required to prepare a written condemnation of his behavior and submit it to the entire Meeting for approval. All Friends must be satisfied that the written condemnation shows "true repentance" in the accused before the Meeting will accept the paper and allow the person to remain a member. Occasionally the paper must be revised to satisfy the Meeting more completely. The defendant who refuses to prepare such a paper is subject to disownment for failing to comply with prescribed methods for satisfying the Meeting. The entire Meeting, not only the clerk and overseers, must decide if and when a disorderly person should be disowned.

Disownment is, of course, the most serious action taken by the Meeting. To avoid such recourse considerable time and effort are spent trying to convince the accused that he must repent and condemn his conduct in writing. Only after it has become too evident that the defendant feels no remorse will the Meeting expel him. Under the general rules of discipline the Meeting must give the accused ample opportunity to make satisfaction. The Meeting cannot disown him summarily unless he intentionally thwarts all efforts by Friends to bring him into unity with Quaker principles and conduct.

If disownment seems necessary, the clerk states that it

is the "sense of the Meeting" that they must "testify against" the transgressor. He prepares a written testimony explaining the reasons for disownment, which must be suitable to the offense and acceptable to the Meeting. If approved by the other members, the clerk signs the paper on behalf of the Meeting and orders that it be read at the end of a first-day meeting for worship.

Any Friend disowned by his Meeting has the right to appeal that decision to the Quarterly Meeting. After a thorough investigation in the case, the Quarterly Meeting will either uphold the disownment or recommend that the Monthly Meeting reconsider its position and try to deal further with the accused. If the accused remains dissatisfied with the Quarterly Meeting judgment, he may appeal to the Yearly Meeting. All parties involved must adhere to the decision of the Yearly Meeting. It is, indeed, a lengthy process of discipline which affords the accused many opportunities to prove his innocence or show repentance for disorderly conduct.

One point should be emphasized here. The Monthly Meeting does not determine what constitutes "disorderly conduct"; that is the function of the Yearly Meeting. The Monthly Meeting merely applies the Discipline to its own members. The Monthly Meeting is free, however, to decide at what point it has completed its obligation to the accused and should terminate its dealings with him.

The chapters that follow will consider the experience of Middletown Monthly Meeting in its enforcement of Quaker discipline between 1755 and 1770. Each chapter will discuss a particular form of misconduct as well as the methods applied by Middletown Friends in trying to overcome the faults of individual members.

CHAPTER II

THE MEN'S MONTHLY MEETING AND DISORDERLY CONDUCT

Middletown Meeting was frequently troubled by male Friends who did not comply with Quaker standards for personal conduct. Un-Quakerly conduct usually took the form of fighting, quarrelling, swearing, or excessive drinking. The Meeting minutes clearly show that far too many Middletown members engaged in such disagreeable actions at one time or another and had to be disciplined by the Monthly Meeting. Between 1755 and 1770 no fewer than twelve Friends were castigated for fighting and quarrelling. At least nineteen men had to be reprimanded or punished for excessive drinking. Although there were only two cases of swearing, both culprits were soon disowned. Any belief that all colonial Quakers were mild-mannered persons would be dispelled instantly through a perusal of meeting records. Middletown Friends exhibited all the weaknesses of non-Friends in any era.

The charge against "fighting and swearing in public" was fairly recurrent in Middletown Meeting. Of the twelve men who fell under this accusation, five were eventually disowned for their actions and for their failure to demonstrate true repentance. In one case the accused refused to condemn his faults, arguing that Quaker "Rules are too Straight for him to keep to."

Such a person found little sympathy among other Friends and was disowned.

One young man appeared before the Monthly Meeting accused of fighting, quarrelling, and using profanity. He explained that he would be able to make "verbal satisfaction" for his unruly behavior but said his father would not allow his preparing a written condemnation for the Meeting. The Meeting advised him that only written acknowledgements satisfied members, but for two months the accused made no effort to meet that demand. As the Meeting was about to prepare a testimony against him, the youth suddenly appeared with the required written testimony to exonerate himself. While his paper was under Friends' consideration for several months, some persons learned that the offender's conduct had not improved sufficiently. After extensive dealings with this young man, the Meeting expelled him.²

Occasionally the Meeting was confronted with a member who, after committing an offense, left the region without making proper satisfaction for his disorders. When Middletown learned that one Friend, charged with fighting and quarrelling, had departed in haste, the Meeting immediately declared its "Sense" that he be disowned.³ Under these circumstances the Meeting would make an effort to find the culprit and tell him of their decision, just in case he wanted to appeal the judgment. Most fugitives, however, were never located.

At times the Monthly Meeting required the accused to revise his written condemnation if it was not sufficiently

comprehensive. Although one man did prepare a formal acknowledgement of his wrongdoings, the Meeting expressed discontent since he condemned the actions "in so sparing a manner, that Friends cannot accept thereof."⁴ After revision of the paper, the Meeting did approve it. A demand for revision was repeated from time to time, showing that Friends could be satisfied with no less than complete recognition of one's faults. In effect the writing of a formal condemnation by the guilty party forced the individual to humble himself before the community. The written confession seems to have had a cathartic function in Quaker discipline.

A widespread form of deviation from Quaker standards was excessive use of alcoholic beverages. From 1755 to 1770 twelve Middletown men were cast out of the Meeting for intemperance; this constitutes more than half the number charged with that offense. While the Society did not ban drinking altogether, Friends expected members to use "strong drink" in moderation. They must have believed that the person who drank too much would soon find himself committing other acts objectionable to the religious order. Heavy drinking usually led to swearing, fighting, and possibly even sexual immorality. The records show that the person found drinking immoderately was often charged with other disorders as well.

Those Friends accused of "being disordered with strong Drink" appear to have been especially reluctant to admit their fault. One unfortunate Friend, charged with drunkenness, admitted he had been fighting but denied being drunk at the time.

The Meeting was hardly consoled by that defense and expressed its opinion that the accused had raised "Suspicion by an unnecessary frequenting of Taverns."⁵ Within several months he was disowned. Another man, equally misguided, attributed his drunken conduct to a source other than alcohol but had some difficulty explaining that other source to the Meeting.⁶ A third member left the "Province without applying for a certificate" (to another Meeting) after he was accused of drinking excessively. When approached about his irregular conduct, he told Middletown Friends he no longer wanted to be a part of the Society.⁷ Still others simply refused to acknowledge their bad habits, and failing to satisfy the Meeting, they too were disowned.⁸

The connection between drinking and other vices was evident in the case of one Middletown Friend, about whom the Monthly Meeting heard "scandalous reports." The Meeting expressed its desire that he explain those reports and try to clear himself if possible. At the following session, other members reported:

...he is become remarkable for excessive use of strong Drink and hath indulged himself in corrupt language and keeping idle and disorderly company, and Dancing, and other unseemly Behavior, and refuses to condemn his Misconduct as our Discipline directs⁹

When the Meeting decided to testify against him, the accused soon informed Middletown Friends that he would appeal the decision at Bucks Quarterly Meeting. However, the Quarterly Meeting later upheld Middletown's testimony, and a paper of disownment was published.¹⁰

As mentioned earlier, two Middletown men were disowned for no

more than the use of profanity. One of these, the minutes report, had "railed upon and villified holy Men, recorded in Scripture of Truth."¹¹ That Middletown Friends were impatient with persons who committed so blasphemous an act is obvious from the fact that the Meeting made little effort to gain satisfaction from the accused and summarily disowned him. The person who defamed biblical figures pushed the Meeting beyond the point of forgiveness. The second man expelled for using profanity sealed his fate by refusing to appear before the Meeting to make proper apology.¹²

Perhaps, as one wayward Quaker remarked, Quaker rules were "too straight" for the individual living in an undeveloped colonial society, but the Society of Friends did not allow the individual to brush aside his misconduct as a product of the environment. Quaker standards were applicable to all conditions, and no compromises were permitted. The rules of discipline opened an avenue by which the disorderly Friend could apologize and retain good standing in the Meeting. If he failed to acknowledge his faults with sincerity, he was deserving of expulsion. Disownment resulted not from misconduct alone, but from the refusal to renounce it for the future.

CHAPTER III

THE MEN'S MEETING AS GUARDIAN OF MARRIAGE AND MORALITY

On first consideration one might assume that the topic of marriage and sexual morality would fall under the sphere of the Women's Monthly Meeting and that male Friends would not be very concerned with those areas of human conduct. But Middletown men spent a substantial part of each Monthly Meeting session dealing with the questions of how their members married, whom they married, and what kind of private moral standards they exhibited. The Men's Meeting took pains to insure that Middletown Friends followed the Society's guidelines in carrying through an orderly marriage under Quaker auspices; it also tried to detect any compromise of Friends' high standards for sexual conduct. When a member fell short of the Meeting's expectations in these matters, he was promptly brought before the congregation and asked to make satisfaction for his aberration.

Two general categories of such offenses will be discussed in this chapter. The first group covers marriage conduct, which includes marrying non-Quaker women, marrying without the proper Meeting certificates, or marrying in some other "disorderly" manner. From the evidence in the Meeting minutes, distinctions under this category are not always clearly described. Frequently, the minutes simply state that a member's marriage was "disorderly,"

which could mean any of the proscribed conditions.

The second category covers cases involving what the Society considered sexual immorality. This group includes persons found guilty of fornication, fathering a bastard child, or lesser unchaste actions. The cases under this heading are of a more serious nature, and the penalties for the guilty were more severe. Eight of the persons accused of sexual immorality were disowned by the Meeting, testifying to Friends' reluctance to excuse such misconduct.

Six Middletown men were disciplined for marrying non-Quaker women. These unsanctioned marriages were reported from 1761 to 1765. If the minutes are complete on this matter, the Meeting testified against and disowned four of the accused without first giving them an opportunity to make formal satisfaction.¹ Two other men Friends did offer the Meeting papers in which they acknowledged their wrongs in deviating from the Society's rules, papers which the Meeting accepted.² Why the four others did not have the opportunity to submit apologies or, if they did, why they did not follow suit is not explained in the records. Perhaps, there were additional reasons for which these four deserved disownment.

Eight other men were charged with "outgoings in marriage" or "disorderly marriage." "Outgoings" usually indicates that the accused had gone out from the community of Quakers and married a non-Friend. However, since marriage to a non-Friend was mentioned specifically in other cases, these cases may have been different.³ "Disorderly marriage" meant one made "contrary to

the good order of Friends." If the individual married without applying to the Monthly Meeting for a proper certificate, he was disorderly. If the person married before the end of the customary waiting period (which allowed time for the Meeting to investigate any undisclosed commitments), that too was disorderly. Five marriages of Middletown men were classified as such.⁴ A sixth case of disorderly marriage involved a young man who failed to obtain his parents' consent before his marriage. Although this was clearly contrary to Quaker procedure, he was excused after presenting a written statement of his repentance to the Meeting.⁵ Among the men charged with "disorderly marriage" or "outgoing in marriage" three were disowned by the Meeting.⁶

It is not difficult to understand Friends' policies toward marriage if one considers the nature of Quaker beliefs. The Friend who married someone outside the faith might find his allegiance to Quaker principles divided. How could the Anglican, Presbyterian, or Baptist spouse immediately appreciate, let alone practice, Quaker pacifism or refusal to take an oath? These were principles that sometimes troubled even those who had been Quakers since birth. It would take time for the outsider to become accustomed to the requirement of plain dress or the practice of silent, unprogrammed worship.

Friends also placed importance upon preparing for marriage in a slow, orderly manner. The Monthly Meeting had to give its written approval before a couple could marry under Quaker rules. Friends wanted to be certain the engaged couple had given marriage extensive consideration; they also wanted to be sure there were

no other secret commitments made by the two persons involved. Parental approval was necessary too; it was recognized that marrying without parents' consent might cause a split in the family. Young persons did not always see the importance of strong familial ties until it was too late. Hasty weddings might cause problems for the individual and could reflect unfavorably upon the Quaker community. One Middletown Friend saw those possibilities and referred to them in his written condemnation:

Whereas I the said Subscriber, having had my birth and education amongst Friends, but contrary to the rules of our Discipline have consummated marriage with a woman not in community with Friends, and too early after the decease of my former wife, though precautioned against it, which hath brought trouble on myself and Friends, which I am heartily sorry for: Now to clear the Society of this disorderly conduct, I do with abhorrence of my said disorders condemn the same, and take the Blame thereof to myself, hoping that Friends will accept of this my sincere acknowledgement, and continue me under their care, as my future conduct may render me worthy.⁷

Tied in with the problem of marriage was the question of sexual morality. The cases brought to the attention of Middletown Monthly Meeting seem to fall into four categories of sexual conduct: unchaste pre-marital behavior, early birth of first child, fornication, and fathering a bastard. The severity of punishment for those offenses seems to appear in that order also, fornication and fathering a bastard being the more inexcusable of this group. Three Middletown men were disciplined for their unchaste actions prior to marriage,⁸ while four others proved themselves even more careless by fathering children too quickly after the wedding ceremony.⁹ Of those seven cases, two led to disownment for persons who refused to express regret

for the early births of their first children.¹⁰

Although only one Friend was charged with and disowned for the crime of fornication,¹¹ five men were accused of fathering illegitimate children.¹² The person charged with siring a bastard seemed to cause the Meeting the most trouble since it was not always easy to substantiate the accusation. Usually the accused denied the report, compelling the Meeting to initiate an investigation to determine which party was speaking the truth. In such circumstances the Meeting members had to bring the woman and the alleged father together to see which one evidenced guilt. If the woman persisted in the charge, the Meeting usually sided with her. The minutes report that in one such confrontation the man and woman contradicted each other's story so much, it was impossible to assess the man's guilt. But since the alleged father found no way to prove his innocence, the Meeting was forced to testify against him to protect the image of the Society of Friends.¹³

In another instance of bastardy, the accused Friend confirmed his guilt when he left the township in a "disorderly and clandestine Manner."¹⁴ The evasion of one's responsibility brought a rapid decision for expulsion from the Meeting. One man had the audacity to deny the Meeting's charges, as the minutes state, even after he had been "legally convicted" as the father of an illegitimate child.¹⁵ The Friend who refused to confess his guilt and adhere to the Quaker's obligation to make the Meeting "easy" was doubly condemned by the Society.

Un-Friendly conduct in marriage and sex was seen as

undermining the reputation and security of all Quakers. The hasty marriage, especially with a non-Friend, seemed to weaken the chances for success in maintaining Quaker principles. Too many marriages outside the religious community would lead to a dilution of Friends' precepts and would threaten to fracture Quaker organization. Similarly, irresponsible sexual practices would detract from the otherwise good example the Quakers set for the outside world. Even if the outsider thought the Quakers were peculiar and unreasonable in some respects, the Society wanted him to recognize their high moral standards; that respect might help to compensate for the stranger's frustration with "irresponsible" Quaker pacifism or tough Quaker business practices. Considerations of this nature were probably quite meaningful to Pennsylvania Friends who experienced a massive attack on their colonial influence in the seventeen-fifties and seventeen-sixties.

CHAPTER IV

THE MEETING AS A DEBT COLLECTION AGENCY

In twentieth century churches there appears to be general agreement that there is a limit at which the church ceases to have authority over its members' conduct. As long as the individual member attends religious services regularly and exhibits good behavior in his daily life, the church considers him to be in good standing. Church authorities do not pry into his financial affairs and excommunicate or disown the member whose business dealings are disorderly or suspicious. But eighteenth century Quakers did not hold this concept of limited ecclesiastical authority and did not hesitate to investigate matters considered beyond the realm of present-day churches.

The personal financial affairs of every member fell under the watchful eye of the Monthly Meeting. If a member conducted business dealings in a suspicious manner, that was considered a topic for discussion in the Meeting. The financial issue that most frequently came before Middletown Meeting was a Friend's failure to make payment on a debt. These debt disputes usually involved a borrower and a lender who were both members of Middletown Meeting. Many such cases appeared in the Meeting between 1755 and 1770, and while some were settled with ease and speed, others dragged on to the disappointment of the

Meeting and the creditors involved.

There are several outstanding reasons why Friends frowned upon the debtor and why they considered a member's indebtedness the subject for Meeting discussion. One reason is connected to the Quaker emphasis on speaking the truth. When a Friend borrowed money from another and promised to repay the loan by a set deadline, he could not be absolutely certain he would be able to fulfill his agreement. If he could not make payment after giving his word that he would, he had spoken an "untruth" and had deceived his creditor.¹ The Friend who could not meet his financial obligations was considered untrustworthy and a threat to the good reputation of Quakers as honest businessmen.

Furthermore, an unpaid debt sometimes led to legal suits initiated by the creditor who could exact payment through no alternative means. Quakers disliked such legal procedure, using the courts as the very last means of gaining relief. All disputes should be settled among Friends without going to the courts, for law suits resulted in continued animosity between the parties involved, causing disunity among Friends. If the persons in dispute were genuinely interested in reaching an agreement, as sincere Christians should be, no basis for legal action could exist. Law suits involving Friends damaged the image of the Society.

Another argument against Friends making private loans was the willingness of the Monthly Meeting to assist those members who were honestly in need of additional funds.² If accident brought disaster upon a member, the Meeting offered aid in restoring his losses. The person whose property had been

destroyed by fire or whose crops had failed because of unfavorable weather could expect relief through the Meeting. If Friends were industrious and honest, there would be no reason for borrowing money from neighbors.

Despite the standing Quaker policy against indebtedness, many Middletown Friends ignored the advice and soon found themselves deep in debts they could not repay. From 1755 to 1770, the Meeting heard nineteen complaints brought against members who failed their creditors. Only nine of these cases ended in settlements satisfactory to all parties concerned.³ Where agreements were reached, it was usually accomplished within two months after the initial complaint. In instances where the problem could not be solved within the Meeting, the accused debtor was frequently disowned for his failure to cooperate.

The procedure followed by the Meeting in resolving debt disputes was parallel to that of other disciplinary matters. The creditor or, if he was not a Friend, his representative presented a complaint to the Meeting, asking for its assistance in collecting payment from the debtor Friend. If the debtor was present when the complaint was lodged, he was expected to acknowledge the truth of the charge and explain how he intended to satisfy the creditor. If the accused was absent, the Meeting appointed someone to speak to him and express the Meeting's concern in the matter.

If the debtor denied part or all of the accusation, the Meeting appointed a committee to act as an arbitration board to hear both sides of the dispute and try to bring about an agreement. If the committee found that the creditor's position was

just, the debtor had to satisfy both the plaintiff and the Meeting as quickly as possible. The Monthly Meeting was not reluctant to disown the person who ignored the recommendation of Friends. Likewise, the Meeting showed disapproval toward the creditor who failed to apply Christian patience and took legal action before the Meeting gave its consent to do so. Quaker procedures in such matters were often slow, but there was no doubt in Friends' opinions that the Quaker way was in the long run superior to legal settlement.

On occasion it was impossible to follow the prescribed method for dealing with negligent debtors. Three Middletown Friends were accused of moving out of the township without first paying their debts.⁴ Since they had departed "in a clandestine Manner," the Meeting could not effect the desired settlement of payment and had to disown those men for their un-Quakerly conduct. A fourth member had moved to another area and requested a letter from Middletown Meeting recommending him to Friends in his new location. However, Middletown learned that he had failed to satisfy his creditors and so withheld the recommendation.⁵ Whether he finally paid his debt or was eventually disowned by Middletown Friends is not mentioned in the records.

Four other Friends were disowned because they showed a lack of interest in complying with Meeting advice that they try to satisfy their creditors.⁶ Middletown dealt with each of these members for several months until it became all too evident that they could not be influenced by Quaker advice. Their attitudes

and conduct clearly proved they did not accept Quaker principles and should consequently be expelled from the Society.

In one instance the Monthly Meeting eventually took the side of the accused debtor. After a complaint had been presented, the Meeting dealt with the accused, trying to persuade him to make payment on the loan. Apparently the plaintiff was impatient with the slow Quaker process and initiated a legal suit to exact payment. When the debtor reported that he was being sued, Middletown Meeting agreed to give no further assistance to the creditor and dismissed the case.⁷

Another dispute led to legal action against a Middletown Friend. Both parties were members of the Meeting, but after several months of proceedings among Friends, the creditor lost patience with Quaker methods and took the issue to court. There is no mention of the outcome of this case, but several months later the alleged debtor asked for and received a letter of recommendation to another Meeting.⁸ Although he had been careless in his finances and had forced another Friend to sue him, his conduct somehow did not warrant the Meeting's condemnation.

Although eventually settled to everyone's satisfaction, another case caused considerable confusion in Middletown Meeting. In 1760 one Friend accused another of failing to repay a loan, but the alleged truant denied the charge, saying the creditor kept faulty accounts. The accused challenged him to prove the charge in court, and while the Meeting was dealing with these countercharges, a third person issued a complaint against the same debtor. The second stage of this controversy continued for several months until the unruly debtor finally

reached an agreement with the second creditor, admitted his faults, and sincerely apologized for having sued his first creditor. His apology seems to have satisfied the Monthly Meeting which dropped the matter altogether.⁹

Of the nineteen cases involving debt defaults, only nine were satisfactorily handled within the Meeting while seven others led to disownment of the accused. It appears that the Quaker method was successful in one respect; the involvement of the Meeting generally prevented Friends from going to civil authorities to settle their financial problems. It is true that a few Middletown men did go to court, but the majority refrained from that course of action. All the plaintiffs seem to have had sufficient reason to sue, but most also showed respect for Quaker aversion to legal entanglements.

Frederick B. Tolles has explained the substance of the "Quaker economic ethic" and its connection to early Protestant attitudes toward worldly wealth and business dealings.¹⁰ What is important here is the Quaker concern for Truth which led Friends to oppose unnecessary indebtedness. They also recognized that debt strained good relations between individuals, often producing mistrust and disrespect. Friends were expected to avoid any practice that might result in disunity among them; borrowing and lending clearly revealed such tendencies.

CHAPTER V

THE SLAVEHOLDER AND MIDDLETOWN MEETING

After 1754, the year John Woolman published his thoughts on slaveholding, Friends in Pennsylvania were increasingly concerned with the question of slavery in relation to Quaker principles. In 1758 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting announced its decision that Friends under its authority should be prevented from full participation in Meeting affairs if they continued to buy or sell Negro slaves.¹ Once that decision had been made, all Quarterly and Monthly Meetings in the vicinity were expected to see that their members complied with the Yearly Meeting directive.

Until 1758 the Society of Friends had officially tolerated slaveholding by their members although there were numerous outspoken Friends who pleaded for Quaker abolition of the practice.² The Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's gradual reversal of its long-standing position on slavery was to a great degree the result of efforts by John Woolman, a New Jersey Friend who brought his deep and pressing arguments against slavery before Yearly Meeting after 1750. Woolman's quiet but persistent effort led to the decision of 1758.

What general explanation can be given for the change in Quaker policy toward slavery? By the mid-eighteenth century more Friends became convinced that the "brotherhood of man" included

the black as well as the white. Friends also believed that the individual, whether black or white, should try to lead a Christ-like life; many began to realize that the condition of the slave did not encourage the development of his full spiritual potential since the slave's existence was directed by another man's will. Clear evidence that the slave could not measure up to Christian principles was seen in the separation of Negro families, which naturally led to adultery.³

In a letter from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting to its subordinate meetings in 1754, the following reason for opposition to slavery was given:

How then can we, who have been concerned to publish the Gospel of universal love and peace among mankind, be so inconsistent with ourselves as to purchase such who are prisoners of war, and thereby encourage this anti-Christian practice?⁴

Friends were beginning to recognize that the slave was a product of war and human violence; this made it inconsistent for Friends to preach pacifism and simultaneously accept the benefits of labor obtained through warfare.

Another problem tied to Negro slavery was the constant possibility of slave rebellions. What would the Quaker master do if his slave suddenly took up arms against him and other white men? How would the Quaker react if his slave committed any act of violence? Was not the slaveholder responsible for the conduct of his property? Obviously, these questions placed the Quaker slaveholder in a very difficult position. The master had to adhere to strict Quaker principles of non-violence; he was not free to react as non-Quaker masters could react to slave violence. The Quaker master had a dual responsibility which

could not be fulfilled without compromising values.⁵

The policy of Yearly Meeting in 1758 did not require Friends to free their black slaves; it merely required discontinuation of the sale and purchase of Negroes. In forming this policy, the Yearly Meeting undoubtedly expected the result to be a decrease in Quaker-owned slaves through deaths and manumissions over a period of time. But this plan for gradual abolition was set aside when the Yearly Meeting demanded immediate emancipation in 1776.⁶ However, in the period from 1755 to 1770, the problem confronting Monthly Meetings was the buying and selling of Negroes, and Middletown Meeting had to deal with it.

In 1763 Middletown Meeting was told that several members were still buying slaves contrary to Yearly Meeting warnings. Following customary procedure, a committee was appointed to investigate the situation, talk with the slave-buyers, and "endeavor to convince them of the Inconsistency of such a Practice with the Discipline of Friends and Principles of Truth, which teaches, 'To do to others as we would be done by.'"⁷ After making inquiries, the committee discovered that seven Middletown men had recently bought Negroes and could not be persuaded of the "Evil in it."⁸ The guilty persons were asked to consider their actions thoroughly and try to recognize the wisdom in the Yearly Meeting directive.

Since the slave-buyers were frequently absent from the business meetings, it proved difficult for the Meeting to solve the problem rapidly. After six months of effort by the Monthly Meeting, one of the accused finally admitted before the assemblage

that purchasing Negroes was in fact an "evil practice" which he would avoid in the future.⁹ That confession satisfied the Meeting, which recognized he could do no more since the purchase had already been sealed.

By the third month of 1764, Middletown Meeting expressed its dissatisfaction with the slave-buyers who showed little interest in following Quaker advice. The Meeting was especially disturbed by one of the accused who not only refused to renounce buying slaves, but also "persists in vindicating his practice."¹⁰ He was admonished that if he continued to justify the already censured practice, the Meeting would be required to begin disciplinary proceedings against him. When he ignored the "sense of the Meeting," Middletown declared its "Disunion" with him:

This Meeting having weightily under its Consideration the Case of W. R. who hath, contrary to the known rules of our Society, lately purchased a Negro slave: And notwithstanding the kind and repeated endeavors of Friends to convince him of the Inconsistency of the Practice of Slavekeeping with the Precepts of the Gospel in general, and that Divine Injunction in particular, which teaches, 'To do unto others, as we would they should do unto us,' he refuses to make any Acknowledgement of his Error, but pleads for and vindicates the Practice, declaring he would do the like at any Time when Occasion should present: wherefore we do agreeable to the Direction of our Discipline in such cases hereby show our Disunion with him, by refusing to permit him to sit in our Meetings for Business, or to be employed in the Affairs of Truth, neither can we receive from him any Contributions for the Services of the Meeting, untill he come to be convinced of his Error, and properly condemn the same.¹¹

It should be noted here that W. R. was not disowned in the most precise language. In 1758 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting had directed subordinate Meetings to exclude slave-buyers "from participation in the business affairs of the church."¹² The word "disown" does not appear in Middletown's statement, and there

is sufficient evidence to show that the Meeting did not hesitate to say "disown" when it meant that. Apparently W. R.'s position in the Meeting after this testimony was somewhere between total exclusion and full membership. His offense seemingly did not warrant complete expulsion from the religious community.

Middletown's decision to declare its "disunion" with one slave-buyer seems to have acted as a catalyst in persuading the others that purchasing blacks was unwise among Friends. In the following month three other slaveholders promised the Meeting that they would never again buy Negroes.¹³ While these acknowledgements pleased Middletown Friends, the Meeting was still bothered by the absence of slaveholders from business meetings. The issue of buying slaves was deferred from session to session because of this.

In succeeding months another Middletown slavemaster caused the Meeting some uneasiness when, after promising not to purchase blacks in the future, he added that he was not yet convinced that dealing in slaves was wrong.¹⁴ Other Friends labored with him, trying to make him aware of the inappropriateness of slaveowning among Friends.¹⁵ They asked him "to consider the matter in the most solid Manner he is capable of." After long and patient dealings with him, the Meeting gained relief when he "declared that upon more mature Consideration he is fully convinced of the Evil of encouraging the Importation or buying of Negroes, and that he hopes to be careful to have no hand therein for the future."¹⁶

With this last acknowledgement in the second month

of 1765, the issue of dealing in slaves reached its conclusion in Middletown Meeting. The question of black slavery would not be resurrected until the following decade when in the year of the American Declaration of Independence, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting directed its subordinate members to make immediate provisions for emancipation of their Negroes.

If only seven Middletown men broke the Society's rule against buying slaves, slavery cannot be considered a widespread problem in the Meeting during this period. Nevertheless, the Meeting carried out its obligation to Yearly Meeting by keeping a close watch on its slaveholding members. Its efforts in this matter were successful in persuading all but one of its members that further trading in black slaves would not be tolerated by the Society. Apparently the one Friend who was condemned never did come to recognize the evil in slavery; his name is listed among Bucks County slaveowners in 1782.¹⁷

CHAPTER VI

MISCELLANEOUS DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

Despite the large number of male Friends disciplined by Middletown Meeting, there were relatively few cases that might be considered unusual or exceptional in nature. The great majority of disciplinary actions taken by the Men's Meeting between 1755 and 1770 dealt with disorders that now appear to have been quite prevalent among Middletown Friends. Violations of Quaker marriage rules and moral standards occurred with noted regularity. Likewise fighting, swearing, and excessive drinking were by no means rare forms of misconduct for male members at Middletown. But it is in the unusual, the infrequent, type of misconduct that one begins to recognize the scope of the Meeting's control over the lives of its members. The cases described in this chapter may serve to increase understanding of the extent to which the Monthly Meeting was determined to keep its members in line with Quaker principles.

There is one policy or tradition of the Society of Friends that few Middletown men ignored: pacifism. Since its beginnings in the mid-seventeenth century, pacifism is that principle of Quakerism of which most non-Friends are aware. George Fox, the prime mover of Quakerism, had said that he "lived in the virtue

of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars."¹ Under Fox's leadership the early Friends quickly became known for their refusal to take up arms against other men. That tradition has continued to the present and remains a vital part of the Quaker testimony to the modern world.

In the years 1755 and 1756 Pennsylvania Quakers faced an immensely difficult problem. The colonial assembly was still under the control of members of the Society of Friends, as it had been since the last decades of the seventeenth century. However, the seventeen-fifties saw the beginning of an Indian problem that threatened the safety of Pennsylvanians living on the frontier. Quaker pacifism seemed to prevent the Assembly's doing anything to prepare for defense of the white settlers against Indian raids.² Many Quaker politicians responded to this insoluble dilemma by resigning their offices and allowing non-pacifists to take control of the province. Other Friends compromised their pacifist principles and continued to engage actively in political affairs.³

The crisis that faced the Quaker politician at the start of the French and Indian War undoubtedly had to be confronted also by any Friend old enough and physically able to enlist in military service. It was, perhaps, one thing to oppose all wars in principle and quite another to refuse to take up arms to defend one's own province against the Indians in 1756. During the period of the War, 1756-1763, three Middletown Friends abandoned their Quaker ideals and became involved in military activities.⁴

In the year 1756 two of these Middletown men were

disciplined and finally disowned for having "taken up Arms in a warlike Manner." Each of these persons told members of the Meeting "he thinks it is his Duty to do so."⁵ Since neither of the accused could sincerely renounce his conduct or showed any desire to satisfy the Meeting in the matter, both were testified against and excluded from the Society until they were ready to demonstrate "true Repentance."⁶ In the Meeting minutes, there is no evidence that the Friends who spoke with the accused permitted any compromise on the issue of military service; there is no indication that Friends sympathized with them and realized it may have been a difficult decision for them in the light of their upbringing.

A third individual avoided disownment for the same offense when his case appeared in 1762. There is only one reference to this person in the records.⁷ That reference does not state that the Meeting formally asked him to make satisfaction for his un-Quakerly behavior, leaving the impression that he voluntarily submitted the following paper condemning his "rash and disorderly Conduct in inlisting himself into military service":

I the subscriber, having had my birth and Education amongst Friends, and made some Profession of the Truth with you, but for want of a diligent Attention to that which would have preserved me in the way I should walk, I was prevailed upon to wander from amongst you for a Season, and inlisted myself into the King's Service, in order to assist in making fortifications against the Enemy, which being inconsistent with the Principles of our Christian Religion, the Sense whereof has brought real Concern and Trouble upon me, with desires that friends would still continue their Love and Care toward me, hoping for the future I may live a life more worthy.⁸

Having written that obviously sincere apology for the Meeting's approval, he remained in good standing with the Society.

Over seventy disciplinary cases came before Middletown Monthly Meeting between 1755 and 1770. If only three instances of military service occurred in that period, it seems clear that Friends at Middletown did not try to challenge the Quaker precept of pacifism, even at a time when some persons might have considered its abandonment both necessary and justifiable. Although other Pennsylvania Friends, living closer to the frontier and the Indian threat, may have compromised Quaker beliefs, Middletown men entertained no such thoughts.

A few Middletown members troubled the Meeting with their un-Quakerly conduct with regard to law and the courts. At a time when many Friends in the colony were deeply involved in provincial politics, there was always the possibility that a Friend would find a conflict between his obligations to the Society and his civic responsibilities. One case of this nature developed in Middletown Meeting when members learned that one was "in frequent practice of administering an Oath."⁹ Although there is no precise information contained in the minutes, one might assume that the person in question was a lower official in the local courts.

Quaker opposition to taking and administering oaths dates from the earliest years of Quakerism in England. The reason for this policy was and still is Friends' belief that the oath established a "double standard of truth."¹⁰ Taking an oath implied that the individual might not speak the truth unless he first swore to do so. Friends argue that the Bible warns against any swearing, which they interpret to include oaths taken in court.

They also believe that the person who would not speak the truth without the oath would not do so with one.¹¹ So, by the mid-eighteenth century Friends had a long-standing traditional opposition to oaths, and that tradition weighed heavily upon the Middletown Friend whose political office required his administering oaths.

When the Meeting warned him that the Society stood against the practice, the accused said he would never again hold political office that required such action.¹² However, that promise alone did not satisfy other Friends who did not think he was yet fully aware of the wrong he committed. After dealing with the offender another two months, the Meeting finally decided he had become completely conscious of his error and could see the inconsistency of the practice with Quaker beliefs; with that agreement the Meeting dropped the case.¹³

As in any discipline, Quaker rules were formulated to maintain order in the Society and to foster cooperation among members. The disciplinary procedure, if followed carefully by Friends, would settle internal differences. Virtually every problem that might confront the Quaker had its outlet through the Monthly Meeting. For these reasons, the Meeting was especially disturbed when a member took his problem outside the religious community and sought a solution in secular institutions. Friends vehemently emphasized that law suits were to be initiated only as last resorts in resolving disputes.

In addition to suits over debts, the Middletown Meeting records mention another law suit, for which the cause is unknown.

In 1759 the Meeting voiced its concern when one Friend took legal action against the wife of another.¹⁴ No explanation is given for the suit, but the Meeting disapproved of it because the plaintiff had failed to make full use of the Quaker procedure for mending disagreement. He had not even brought the problem to the Meeting. Middletown Friends asked him to dismiss the suit and try to redress the difficulty in the Quaker way. Two months later members reported that the dispute had been settled out of court, as the Meeting had suggested.¹⁵ Since the plaintiff had complied with Quaker advice, he was not disciplined.

Considering the Quaker emphasis upon speaking truth and opposing oaths, Middletown must have been shocked to receive reports that one of their members had not been truthful in his testimony "before the Justices in open Court." The Meeting directed an investigation of the matter after public accusations had been levelled against the Friend. The investigating committee delivered a report that seemed to confirm the charge that the individual in question had lied before the county court at Newtown. Although he claimed written proof of his innocence, a second committee could find nothing to support his defense. At the end of five months the accused Quaker finally offered the Meeting a paper of condemnation, indicating that "he more fully acknowledges his impudent Behavior and Expressions in Court."¹⁶ Despite the serious nature of his offense, the Meeting accepted the apology believing the wayward Friend was genuinely repentant. It seems somewhat remarkable that this form of misconduct was so readily excused by Quakers. Truth is the basis

of their faith, and Quaker principles are directly dependent upon speaking the truth, without which the public testimony of Friends is seriously impaired.

There is substantial evidence in Middletown's minutes that Friends placed great importance upon youthful obedience to parents' desires. That is certainly obvious in Quaker policy toward marriage, requiring that the young man or woman seek and obtain parental consent before marrying. Another Middletown case supports that observation.

In 1760 a respected member of the Meeting complained that a young man refused to apprentice himself as his late father's will had instructed.¹⁷ It was also reported that the boy's general behavior was very disorderly. The Meeting appointed two men to talk with the accused and try to persuade him of the wisdom in fulfilling his responsibilities to his late father and the Meeting. While he continued to resist apprenticeship, he did promise to improve his behavior; upon this concession, the Meeting decided to reduce their pressure and watch for favorable developments in the young Quaker's conduct.¹⁸

Two months later a report disclosed that the boy was "guilty of some riotous Behavior in the Night Season," for which he was asked to appear at Meeting to make satisfaction. The accused never complied with that request and, for demonstrating such lack of interest in Friends' opinion, was disowned within months.¹⁹ Middletown Friends had certainly been patient with this disorderly youth and had waited almost a year for him to show some concern, but to no avail.

All the evidence of Quaker discipline leads to the conclusion that colonial Friends who strictly adhered to the rules must have led relatively ascetic lives; Friends ruled out virtually all forms of entertainment enjoyed by colonial non-Quakers. In the rural community dancing and heavy drinking were most likely popular pastimes, but Friends could enjoy neither. For the rural American colonist, horse-racing undoubtedly afforded an outlet for amusement, but Middletown records note that this too was banned by the Society. As for the reason behind this policy, Friends probably believed it was wrong for anyone unnecessarily to overwork his animal, which constituted maltreatment. They also feared a connection between racing and betting.

The Overseers of Middletown Meeting reported that one member had been involved in a horse race. When first approached about the incident, the accused readily confessed to entering his horse in the race but explained that, since he had not made a wager, he honestly could see no wrongdoing on his part. The Meeting was displeased with this half-way acknowledgement and continued to deal with him. After another month the accused Friend reported to the Meeting that he had become fully aware that any involvement in horse-racing was inappropriate for a Quaker. At his request, but contrary to most disciplinary settlements, the Meeting accepted the offender's verbal condemnation of his act.²⁰

Considering the number of Middletown Friends disciplined

between 1755 and 1770, there is little doubt that many were in truth uninterested in Quakerism; certainly many were careless in trying to follow the rules of the Society. However, among all of these cases there was only one instance of disownment specifically because of lack of interest. That person seems to have had no accompanying fault that required expulsion.

This case came before the Meeting when the overseers reported that the person mentioned had been neglecting meetings for worship and seemed also to be in frequent contact with "other Societies." If the interpretation of the minute is correct, he was attending alien religious services and had gradually become convinced that Quakerism no longer delivered his spiritual needs. When a few Friends tried to discuss the matter with him, he treated them with disdain. Under such circumstances Middletown Meeting saw no reason to belabor the issue and summarily disowned him.²¹ It would be interesting to know what explanation he gave for his disaffection.

If the disorders discussed in this chapter were infrequent problems for Middletown Meeting, they demonstrate how little challenge there was to Quaker principles during those fifteen years before the American Revolution. Pacifism was not questioned by Middletown Friends, even though Pennsylvania was in a state of war most of the time. Lack of interest per se was not a major cause of disownments by Middletown during this critical era in Quaker history. And despite the current conflict between Quaker ideals and political realities, Middletown mem-

bers did not permit compromises with their religious traditions.

Furthermore, these cases show the encompassing nature of Quaker discipline and the right asserted by the Monthly Meeting to delve into secular activities of its members. Apprenticeship, conduct in civil courts, even horse-racing fell under the authority of the Meeting. The Friends' Meeting concerned itself with far more than plain dress, Christian speech, and attendance at first-day worship.

CHAPTER VII

THE ROLE OF THE WOMEN'S MEETING IN QUAKER DISCIPLINE

From the beginning of the Quaker movement women Friends were always considered the spiritual equals of the men, but equality did not include participation in the Monthly Meeting for business. Men and women Friends conducted separate Meetings until the twentieth century. The custom stemmed from the belief that certain problems were more easily handled by men while others seemed appropriate for the consideration of women. The authority of the Men's Monthly Meeting was generally greater than that of the Women's.¹ While male Friends handled a wide range of problems, the women were primarily restricted to considering questions involving marriage, sexual conduct, and aid to the needy. The women of Middletown Meeting did not deal with the issues of slavery, military service, debt, and oath-taking in the decade and a half beginning in 1755.

In its operation and structure, Middletown Women's Meeting was parallel to the Men's Meeting. The women selected a clerk every year and established committees whenever the need arose. Disciplinary problems were brought before the Women's Meeting through the same procedure used by the men. On occasion when the women did not feel qualified to judge a particular matter, they referred the case to the Men's Meeting. However,

most of their time was spent approving requests for marriage certificates and considering the irregular marriage procedures of some women members. Women's Meeting sessions appear to have been concerned with more routine matters at Middletown.

One practice was not identical in Men's and Women's Meetings: record-keeping. The manuscript minutes of the Women's Meeting did not meet the standards of the men Friends in terms of complete, accurate reports. In stating a problem brought before Women's Meeting, the minutes are often less than sufficient and reliable. Sometimes a case was mentioned in the minutes only after a settlement had already been reached. While the Men's Meeting minutes are usually consistent in reporting the introduction of a case and following it to its conclusion, this cannot be said about the women's records.

The brevity of the women's minutes leaves the researcher with many unanswered questions. Offenses committed by female Friends were not always clearly described, perhaps indicating that the women were sometimes embarrassed to record certain forms of misconduct. As a result, one is led to believe that either female Friends were careless about their records or they were actually skipping some of the steps in prescribed Quaker discipline. The lack of thorough accounts may mean that female Friends were often less patient with disorderly persons than were the men.

There was little diversity in the cases of misconduct handled by women Friends. A majority of the cases concerned two

basic subjects: marriage and sex. "Outgoing in marriage" was a frequent occurrence among Middletown Meeting women in this period. Thirty-two cases brought to the attention of the Meeting were labelled "outgoings," which could include any number of irregularities. Fourteen women charged with "outgoing" were eventually disowned by the Meeting.

The woman charged with marrying in an un-Quakerly manner was expected, of course, to satisfy the Meeting if she desired to remain a Friend. The accused and her husband were required to present a paper to the Meeting in which they expressed their regret for having abandoned the rules of the Society. If the paper sufficiently condemned the disorder and demonstrated the true repentance of the parties involved, the Meeting accepted the written apology and kept the transgressors in membership. If the persons accused did not seem at all sorry for their aberration, the Women's Meeting "testified against" them and expelled them from the Meeting. This procedure was followed by both the Women's Meeting and the Men's; the wife's case was considered by the Women's Meeting while her husband was judged by the men.

One case will serve as an example of procedure in the Women's Meeting. The Meeting discovered that one member had been married by a "Preest, contrary to the known Rules of friends, for which Licentious Liberties friends concludes to Draw a testimony against her sic." There is no evidence in the minutes that the Women's Meeting made any effort to bring about repentance on the woman's part, and within three months the accused was disowned

by the Meeting.² The accused was apparently showing no inclination to satisfy the Meeting for her "outgoing," but even that is not mentioned in the records.

Quaker women were, naturally, expected to maintain high standards for pre-marital conduct, but Middletown Women's Meeting had to consider many cases in which "outgoing in marriage" was connected to unchaste behavior before the ceremony. Eleven of the women accused of outgoing were also charged with unchaste pre-marital conduct, which became apparent when several of them gave birth within five to seven months after marriage. One unfortunate woman prepared a written condemnation for her "outgoing" and was waiting for the Meeting to accept it when other Friends learned that she had also had a child a mere six months after her wedding. Since she had failed to mention that interesting fact in her paper, the Meeting decided to disown her.³ The Women's Meeting hardly found satisfaction in a condemnation that told only part of the story.

Although the women Friends were always disturbed by the married member who had been unchaste when unmarried, they showed even less sympathy toward the woman who gave birth to a bastard. Four unmarried women were condemned and disowned by Middletown Meeting when Friends discovered their offspring.⁴ One woman who mothered a bastard refused to tell other Friends who the father was. The Meeting considered such information to be important because the father should be disciplined also if he was a Quaker. The woman's failure to cooperate with the Meeting led to her disownment.⁵

Another instance of bastardy was reported to the Meeting by the overseers. The accused party had "gon out in her Marriage and . . . has had a child before Marriage, for which Groce Practices and Ill Conduct friends can do no less than testifie against her."⁶ In such cases it was all but impossible to keep those disorderly persons in the Society; the "libertine life" they led was usually accompanied by an obvious disdain for what proper Friends thought of their conduct.

The Women's Meeting tried also to make members aware of their responsibilities to husband and home. The Meeting had to disown one Middletown woman after she deserted her husband and children. When the desertion was brought to the attention of the Meeting, several women were appointed to try to forge a reconciliation between wife and husband. Precisely what had caused the rift is not well explained in the minutes, but the minutes do state that her husband accused her of "takeing his Goods and Provisions out of his House without his leave and provoking him to Anger in divers ways." After an investigation of the circumstances, the Meeting took the husband's side in the dispute, and the woman was disowned when she refused to listen to Friends' advice and reach an agreement with her spouse.⁷

Turning from the concern of the Women's Meeting for marriage and chastity, there were four cases involving women who failed to adhere to other Quaker rules. One of these persons had only recently joined the Meeting when she indulged herself in the "Fault of Dancing." The Meeting seems to have been understanding in her case and quickly excused the woman when she submitted

her written apology for such misbehavior.⁸

Despite its frequent recurrence as a problem among male Friends, only one case of excessive drinking appeared in the Women's Meeting between 1755 and 1770. The woman in question was accused of "taking too much strong Drink," and several other women tried to persuade her to abandon the habit but to no avail. After many promises from the accused and no apparent progress with her problem, the Meeting disowned her.⁹

Failure to attend religious meetings was cause for disownment in only one instance among female Friends during this period. That charge was combined with a report that the woman had been involved in a "scandalous quarrel" as well. After awaiting her attempt to make satisfaction to the Meeting, but seeing no such effort, the Meeting expelled her.¹⁰

A good example of women Friends' carelessness in explaining the full circumstances of a member's conduct lies in the case of a woman charged with having "taken or destroyed some goods." The minutes do not mention the kind of goods involved or their value, but her guilt was confirmed and the Meeting disowned her, too.¹¹

When compared to the difficulties that often confronted the Men's Meeting, the cases in the Women's Meeting were usually somewhat trivial and very routine. Women's cases were confined more frequently to disorders related to marriage and sex. The problems do not seem to have been as thorny as those of the men. Either the accused acknowledged her faults to satisfy the Meeting or she was disowned; it often appears to have been that simple.



But the appearance of a lack of complexity in women's discipline may be the result of the Meeting's failure to stress in the minutes the extent to which the members tried to keep disorderly persons in unity with the Society. The women did not go far to explain in writing what were probably numerous and laborious efforts to work with the accused in the spirit of Christian concern. Their role in preserving Quaker traditions and principles within the family should not be underrated in a study of Quaker discipline.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PROCEDURE AND SUCCESS IN APPEALS

In Middletown Monthly Meeting from the year 1755 to 1770 there were approximately sixty persons disowned. Despite the large number of disownments, in only five cases did the condemned party choose to appeal the decision of the Monthly Meeting to the Quarterly Meeting. Undoubtedly many of the accused persons recognized that their guilt could be so clearly established that it would be impossible to convince a Quarterly Meeting committee that the Monthly Meeting had been unjust. It is evident that the Monthly Meeting did not disown a member without substantial proof that his conduct warranted such action.

Furthermore, a decision to disown a member usually indicated that the person had lacked interest in making an effort to satisfy the Meeting by showing sufficient repentance for his misconduct. If the individual did not value his membership in the Society to the extent that he would agree to make formal written condemnation of the disorder, he could not be expected to care enough to appeal his disownment to the next level of Quaker authority.

In addition, it appears that the Quarterly and Yearly Meetings rarely reversed the decision of the Monthly Meeting. In none of the five cases involving appeals from Middletown Meeting did the higher Meeting clearly and unquestionably

denounce the Monthly Meeting ruling. In four of these cases, the Quarterly Meeting and the Yearly Meeting upheld in essence the testimony of Middletown against the accused persons. There seems to have been some awareness on the part of higher Meetings that too frequent reversals of Monthly Meeting decisions might lead to a gradual loss of respect for the Meeting system itself.

One case in which the Bucks Quarterly Meeting upheld the decision of the Middletown Friends involved two young men, who were charged with "abusing and robbing" a man on the road at night.¹ When accused of this disorderly conduct, the two young Friends denied the charges. One defendant said he could produce a paper written by the plaintiff himself that would prove their innocence. The paper was never revealed to the Monthly Meeting; consequently, to protect the name of all Friends, the Meeting condemned and disowned the two defendants.²

Upon receipt of the testimony, the two Friends indicated their desire to appeal Middletown's judgment to Bucks Quarterly Meeting.³ The Monthly Meeting appointed a committee to attend the Quarterly Meeting and present all evidence in the case to that body. One of the accused did attend the Quarterly Meeting to prosecute his appeal, but the other party did not appear.⁴ The Quarterly Meeting established a committee to hear the young man's defense as well as the Monthly Meeting argument for his disownment. After hearing both sides and examining all evidence, the Quarterly Meeting upheld Middletown's decision.⁵ Since the second young man failed to prosecute his appeal, the Quarterly

Meeting confirmed his disownment, too.⁶ There was no further appeal to Yearly Meeting in this case.

A third person appealed her disownment by Middletown in 1757. This case originated in the Women's Monthly Meeting when the overseers reported that the woman in question had been "keeping company with another woman's husband" for some time.⁷ Despite numerous admonitions from women Friends, the accused persisted in her impropriety. The matter was handed over to the Men's Meeting for consideration; the female Friends seemed hesitant to take action quickly on their own.⁸ The male Friends wasted little time in judging the woman worthy of disownment. When told she would be expelled, the defendant said she would appeal to the Quarterly Meeting.⁹

To the surprise and dissatisfaction of Middletown Friends, the Quarterly Meeting committee decided that the decision against the woman "Ought to be set aside and the affair referr'd back again" to the Monthly Meeting.¹⁰ Since Middletown members believed their action had been entirely justified, the Monthly Meeting decided to appeal the Quarterly Meeting decision to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.¹¹ In this instance, a committee from Middletown and a committee from Bucks Quarterly Meeting had to attend Yearly Meeting to present their respective arguments in the case.

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, held at Burlington, New Jersey in 1758, appointed its own committee to hear all sides and settle the dispute between the Monthly and Quarterly Meetings. The Yearly Meeting committee upheld the position of Middletown and sent delegates to Bucks Quarterly to reconsider

that body's decision.¹² Representatives of Yearly Meeting and Bucks Quarterly worked together and revised the written testimony Middletown had prepared against the accused woman.¹³ The revised testimony satisfied all the Meetings involved in this controversy. The woman remained out of the Society; only the wording of the disownment paper was altered in the process. What changes were made in the testimony are unknown since it cannot be found among Middletown records today.

Another Middletown woman became involved in disciplinary action that eventually reached Yearly Meeting level. In 1763 the overseers reported to the Women's Meeting that one of its members had given birth to a child after about five months of marriage.¹⁴ After four months of patiently waiting for the accused to prove herself innocent of misconduct, the Women's Meeting decided to testify against her, and this time the women did not bother to consult the Men's Meeting. The accused informed the Meeting that she would appeal her disownment.¹⁵

Following the prescribed procedure, Bucks Quarterly appointed its own committee to hear the case. After investigating both sides and examining Middletown records, the committee determined to sustain the disownment decision of Middletown. When she learned that the Quarterly Meeting had agreed to her disownment, the husband of the accused woman informed the following Quarterly Meeting session that his wife intended to appeal to the Yearly Meeting.¹⁶

At Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in 1765, the Middletown woman prosecuted her appeal with her husband representing her.

The committee appointed to hear the appeal could not reach a decision before the end of the Yearly Meeting sessions.¹⁷ The Yearly Meeting committee did not announce its decision until the following year's session; after lengthy consideration, the committee thought the Middletown judgment against the woman should be sustained.¹⁸ Although that was the report of the committee, the Yearly Meeting as a whole did not immediately approve the committee's report. It was agreed that no final decision would be made until the following Yearly Meeting in 1767.¹⁹ The case seemed to warrant further deliberation. At Yearly Meeting in the autumn of 1767, the entire body finally agreed to support the recommendation of the committee and uphold the decisions of the Monthly and Quarterly Meetings against the woman.²⁰ It had taken four years to the month to complete the process of conviction and appeals in this case. The time and effort spent on appeals would seem to indicate that this woman placed considerable meaning upon her membership in the Society of Friends; such persistence and concern are not apparent in others disowned by Middletown in this period.

One case did appear in which the Quarterly and Yearly Meetings were in greater sympathy with the accused than with Middletown Meeting. This case more fully shows how complex and time-consuming Quaker disciplinary procedure could be. In 1766 Middletown Meeting heard one member, who had been an inspector in a local election, complain that another Friend had charged him with intentionally misreading election ballots. The accusation had been made publicly, so the inspector's reputation was

in jeopardy. The man who had levelled the accusation had promised to produce a witness who would support his charges but he never did so. When the accuser refused to withdraw his remarks and apologize, the Monthly Meeting decided to testify against him since his conduct was causing disunity.²¹

Before the disownment decision was effected, the Friend who had falsely accused another offered the Meeting two written condemnations of his actions, but neither was acceptable to the Meeting. The records indicate that his papers seemed to criticize other persons more than they criticized his own misconduct. When informed that the testimony would be carried out, the accused offered still another paper of condemnation, but that too was rejected. He decided to appeal the decision to Bucks Quarterly Meeting.²²

The case was turned over to the consideration of the Quarterly Meeting, and after investigation into the controversy, a committee decided to set aside Middletown's testimony since it was not really appropriate to the circumstances of the case. It further recommended that although the Friend accused was not entirely blameless, the Monthly Meeting should give him another opportunity to show a penitent attitude. Middletown followed that advice, but when the defendant failed to satisfy the Meeting again, he was testified against for a second time. And for the second time, he appealed to the Quarterly Meeting.²³

In the second appeal the committee of Bucks Quarterly expressed its opinion that Middletown Friends had not treated the accused "with that Mildness and Moderation which every

Offender ought to be treated with." The committee decided against sustaining the Middletown judgment and recommended that the Monthly Meeting accept the defendant's condemnation paper if minor changes were made in it.²⁴

The opinion given by the Quarterly Meeting appeared to confuse Middletown Friends who believed they had followed Quaker rules of discipline with great care. Middletown Meeting requested that the Quarterly Meeting either uphold or reverse the Monthly Meeting decision since Middletown did not fully understand the instructions coming from Quarterly Meeting. The lower Meeting wanted explicit judgment from the superior Meeting, not the ambiguous directives it had so far received.²⁵

At succeeding Quarterly Meetings the committee sitting on the Middletown case tried to clarify its directives to the lower Meeting. The committee explained that it merely believed the controversy should be resolved as quickly as possible; it further explained that Middletown Meeting should be able to accept the defendant's condemnation paper if some slight changes were made. However, the committee added that the choice was Middletown Meeting's in this matter.²⁶

The debate between Middletown and Bucks Quarterly Meeting might have continued for some time if the person whose disownment had brought about the confusion had not helped to end it. After almost three years of dealing with his case, both Monthly and Quarterly Meeting came to the conclusion that the defendant in question was not willing to make sufficient acknowledgement of his misconduct and in fact had become more disorderly since the

introduction of his case. This led the Quarterly Meeting to the decision that Middletown's judgment should be upheld and the guilty party disowned.²⁷

One would think that the entire affair would have ended at that point, but the defendant carried his case to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in 1770. After establishing its own committee to hear the dispute, Yearly Meeting announced its decision in favor of the troublesome Middletown Friend. The committee stated its belief that the whole problem could have been settled within the Monthly Meeting long before if Middletown "had proceeded with that deliberation, unanimity, and tenderness which our Christian Discipline points out, and the nature of his case required." The Yearly Meeting said that the defendant seemed ready to offer a satisfactory paper of condemnation, which Middletown should accept, thereby cancelling the disownment ruling.²⁸

In the last month of 1770 Middletown Meeting accepted a written condemnation from the man who had involved the Meeting in four and a half years of disciplinary proceedings.²⁹ Although his case had produced a minor conflict between Monthly and Quarterly Meetings and had led to a Yearly Meeting reprimand of Middletown's attitude, this Friend retained his membership in the Meeting. It would be interesting to know what kind of reception he got after so many years of painful deliberation in his case!

This seems to have been the most laborious case Middletown

Meeting handled between 1755 and 1770. None of the others discussed earlier involved so much time and effort in reaching settlement. The case demonstrates perfectly that the Quaker method gave every person ample opportunity to obtain justice through the rules of discipline. The subordination of the lower Monthly Meeting to the Yearly Meeting is also quite apparent here; the Monthly Meeting had to be prepared to prove that it had treated the accused with all fairness and Christian love.

CHAPTER IX

THE EXPERIENCE OF QUAKER DISCIPLINE IN MIDDLETOWN MEETING

The number of disciplinary cases, over one hundred and fifty, that came before Middletown Monthly Meeting between 1755 and 1770 might lead an outsider to think that group of Friends had little reason to believe they all shared common religious principles. Considering the incidents of un-Quakerly behavior among Middletown Friends, there may be good cause for concluding that many members were Quakers only through the accident of birth and were not actually devoted to that Truth which had guided their predecessors. While a majority of offenses committed by Meeting members would be termed harmless by other standards, the Middletown Quakers had a century-old tradition of right conduct which they failed to uphold in many cases.

As stated earlier in this study, it is impossible to determine the exact number of members in Middletown Meeting in this fifteen-year period although an estimate of one hundred seventy to two hundred would be close to the actual figure. The lack of a precise figure makes possible only general observations on the significance of the disciplinary problems faced by Middletown Meeting through the year 1770.

An examination of extant manuscript disownments from Middletown shows that at least fifty-five members were expelled

from the Meeting in the decade and a half covered here.¹

Since those extant manuscripts do not include all the disownments mentioned in the Meeting's minutes, the total number of persons expelled was somewhat higher than fifty-five. It is difficult to understand how a small colonial Quaker Meeting could have sustained and survived such a loss in membership. Although other Friends were often moving into the township and joined Middletown Meeting, it is doubtful that new members could have compensated numerically for those who moved away or were disowned at this time. By 1770 the Society of Friends had abandoned active proselytizing, so Middletown Meeting must have depended primarily upon the birth rate of its membership and relocating Friends to recoup its losses.

Does the number of disownments imply that Middletown Friends were inordinately strict in their application of Quaker discipline? The available evidence does not support the idea. If the records are honest, the Meeting adhered very closely to the procedure prescribed in the Book of Discipline issued by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. The "Christian patience" Middletown practiced in handling its unruly members stands out in the written accounts. When misconduct was reported, the immediate reaction of the Meeting was rarely, if ever, a decision to disown the culprit, no matter how offensive his actions. Friends spent lengthy, arduous periods, usually months but often years, dealing with deviants before anyone was disowned. They seem to have exhausted every possible effort to keep the accused within the Quaker brotherhood, and their

patience usually proved worthwhile.

If Middletown Meeting refused to disown the guilty before giving him ample opportunity to retain his membership, the cause of disownments must lie in the attitude of the defendants. Quaker discipline made one demand to the person who broke the rules, a requirement even the Monthly Meeting had no right to overlook. The disorderly Friend had to prove repentance by giving the Meeting a satisfactory written condemnation of error. That obligation seems to account for the large number of disownments in Middletown. Persons who refused to make the written acknowledgement left the Meeting no alternative to expulsion.

The Meeting's minutes show that persons disowned were usually those who failed to appear to defend themselves or refused to prepare the written condemnations. Their failure to show interest in satisfying the Meeting led to disownment; the fault did not lie in Quaker procedure. Anyone who was willing to attend Monthly Meeting and present a written apology was customarily kept under Friends' care. In fact, the Meeting was relieved and gratified when the errant member displayed a penitent attitude.

Further evidence that lack of interest was a primary cause of Middletown disownments is the fact that most of the outcasts did not try to be reinstated in the Meeting at a later time. Any person disowned had the right to reapply for membership if he came to realize its importance in his life. However, of the more than fifty-five persons expelled between

1755 and 1770, only four are known to have requested readmission before the end of 1770.² Three of those persons were reinstated because they were able to show improvement in their conduct and sincerity in their requests.³ Two of those readmitted had moved away from the township and were seeking membership in other Meetings, a procedure requiring a recommendation from Middletown Friends.⁴ Usually, however, persons disowned by Middletown remained outside the Society of Friends; it is unlikely that the individual who showed lack of interest in Quakerism before his disownment suddenly experienced a revitalized concern afterwards.

As for the misconduct that led to disownment, most members who were expelled by Middletown Meeting were guilty of behavior considered reproachful during almost any stage of the Quaker movement. A majority of disownments stemmed from what might be called timeless forms of misconduct: drinking, fighting, swearing, marrying un-believers, and sexual immorality. Despite the confusion and disagreement among Pennsylvania Quakers because of military-political developments in this period,⁵ only a small number of disownments (two are known) resulted from an un-Quakerly view of military service and civil action. That number was so insignificant in comparison to disownments for other misconduct it cannot be said that Middletown was seriously affected, at least not directly, by political circumstances in the colony.

Excessive drinking among male Friends at Middletown led to more disownments than any other misconduct. The Meeting's

constant concern about the use of liquor reflects the "mounting disapproval of liquor" Sydney V. James found within Philadelphia Meetings at that time.⁶ The development of a temperance movement in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting would help to explain Middletown's vigorous prosecution of its drinking members.

The second most important cause of disownments in the Meeting was disorders related to marriage and sex. A large number of Middletown Friends lost their membership because they married non-Quakers and/or were guilty of sexual indiscretions. Although many of the guilty avoided disownment by submitting their written condemnations, a sizeable number of "outgoing" Middletown members refused to apologize for their marriages and were expelled. There appears to have been an even higher rate of disownments among persons accused of sexual misconduct, which is understandable because of its more serious nature.

What is apparent from this study of Middletown Monthly Meeting discipline is that there was, at least in that Meeting, a significant number of Friends who held membership in the Society but whose devotion to the Quaker Way was actually very tenuous. Although a majority of Middletown Friends appear to have been strong in their attachment to Quaker faith and practice, a sizeable minority were weeded out of membership through their own misdeeds and their refusal to admit wrongdoing. Persons whose conduct resulted in disownment were often

described as disinterested in Friends' principles and unconvinced of the need to satisfy the Meeting. That, however, merely indicates that there was already a basic weakness in the religious community. Middletown Meeting must share the responsibility with those expelled; had the Meeting kept a close guard on the spiritual strength of all its members, the lack of "convincement" of those disowned would not have been so complete.

NOTES

The primary sources for this study were the minutes of Middletown Monthly Meeting, Bucks Quarterly Meeting, and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. These sources are cited so frequently in the chapter notes that the following abbreviations will be used:

Min. for Minutes

MMM for Middletown Monthly Meeting of men Friends

MWM for Middletown Monthly Meeting of women Friends

BQM for Bucks Quarterly Meeting of men Friends

PYM for Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of men Friends

The dates following the abbreviation of the Meeting name refer to the month and year of the Meeting minutes from which information was taken. Thus, Min. MMM, X/1762 refers to the Middletown Men's Monthly Meeting held in the tenth month in the year 1762. The month is given in Roman numerals because the Quakers refused to apply pagan Roman names to months of the year.

INTRODUCTION

¹ W. W. H. Davis, The History of Bucks County, Pennsylvania (Doylestown, Pa., 1876), p. 168.

² Ibid., p. 169.

³ Ibid., Chapter XI.

⁴ Ibid., p. 175.

⁵ Jane W. T. Brey, A Quaker Saga: The Watsons of Strawberryhowe, the Wildmans, and Other Allied Families from England's North Counties and Lower Bucks County in Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, 1967).

CHAPTER I

THE STRUCTURE AND PROCEDURE OF QUAKER DISCIPLINE

¹ For an informative, scholarly account of the development of the Quaker Meeting system in England, see Arnold Lloyd, Quaker Social History, 1669-1738 (London, 1950).

² Sydney V. James, A People Among Peoples: Quaker Benevolence in Eighteenth-Century America (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), pp. 7-11.

3 James, A. People Among Peoples, pp. 11-12.

4 Rayner W. Kelsey, "Early Books of Discipline of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting," Friends Historical Association Bulletin, XXIV (1935), pp. 12-23.

5 Ibid., pp. 20-23.

6 Howard H. Brinton, Friends for Three Hundred Years (Wallingford, Pa., 1964), p. 108.

7 Information acquired after examination of the records of Middletown Monthly Meeting of men Friends.

8 There are many sources that offer a description of the Quaker disciplinary procedures. Perhaps, the best is found in Chapter VI of Howard H. Brinton, Friends for Three Hundred Years.

CHAPTER II

THE MEN'S MONTHLY MEETING AND DISORDERLY CONDUCT

1 Min. MMM, VII/1755.

2 Min. MMM, X/1762, XII/1762, I/1763, II/1763, V/1763.

3 Min. MMM, XI/1763, I/1764.

4 Min. MMM, XI/1763.

5 Min. MMM, IV/1756, V/1756, VI/1756, IX/1756.

6 Min. MMM, XII/1757.

7 Min. MMM, VIII/1758.

8 Min. MMM, IV/1756, III/1759, IX/1759, XII/1760, X/1761, III/1762, II/1763, IX/1769.

9 Min. MMM, VIII/1767.

10 Min. MMM, X/1767, XI/1767, III/1768.

11 Min. MMM, I/1759.

12 Min. MMM, IX/1763, XI/1763.

CHAPTER III

THE MEN'S MEETING AS GUARDIAN OF MARRIAGE AND MORALITY

1 Min. MMM, V/1763, VIII/1763, VII/1763, VI/1765.

2 Min. MMM, VIII/1761, X/1761, V/1761, X/1761.

- 3 Min. MMM, IV/1761, VII/1762, I/1766.
- 4 Min. MMM, I/1757, I/1758, VIII/1761, VI/1763, IV/1765.
- 5 Min. MMM, I/1764, III/1764.
- 6 Min. MMM, X/1763, V/1765, V/1766.
- 7 Min. MMM, X/1761.
- 8 Min. MMM, XI/1757, I/1758, VII/1760.
- 9 Min. MMM, XI/1759, IV/1760, X/1760, VII/1766.
- 10 Min. MMM, II/1760, VII/1766.
- 11 Min. MMM, VII/1764, VIII/1764.
- 12 Min. MMM, II/1760, VIII/1760, IX/1761, III/1768,
I/1769.
- 13 Min. MMM, V/1760, VI/1760.
- 14 Min. MMM, IV/1768.
- 15 Min. MMM, I/1769, II/1769.

CHAPTER IV THE MEETING AS A DEBT COLLECTION AGENCY

- 1 See Frederick B. Tolles, Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia, 1682-1763 (New York, 1948), pp. 73 ff.
- 2 James, A People Among Peoples, pp. 51 ff.
- 3 Min. MMM, III/1755, X/1755, V/1757, VII/1757, II-X/1760, X/1765, XI/1766, X/1767, III/1768.
- 4 Min. MMM, VI/1755, III/1760, VI/1765.
- 5 Min. MMM, IV/1763.
- 6 Min. MMM, VII-XII/1759, X/1759-V/1760, II-XI/1762, II-VII/1766.
- 7 Min. MMM, IV/1757, V/1757, VI/1757, VII/1757.
- 8 Min. MMM, II-VIII/1765.
- 9 Min. MMM, II-X/1760.
- 10 Tolles, Meeting House and Counting House, pp. 51 ff.

CHAPTER V
THE SLAVEHOLDER AND MIDDLETOWN MEETING

- ¹ Thomas E. Drake, Quakers and Slavery in America (New Haven, 1950), p. 61.
- ² For background information, see Drake, Chapters I-III.
- ³ David Brion Davis, The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture (Ithaca, N.Y., 1966), p. 309.
- ⁴ Drake, p. 58.
- ⁵ Davis, p. 309.
- ⁶ Drake, p. 72.
- ⁷ Min. MMM, VI/1763.
- ⁸ Min. MMM, VIII/1763.
- ⁹ Min. MMM, I/1764.
- ¹⁰ Min. MMM, III/1764.
- ¹¹ Min. MMM, V/1764.
- ¹² Drake, Quakers and Slavery, p. 61.
- ¹³ Min. MMM, VI/1764.
- ¹⁴ Min. MMM, X/1764.
- ¹⁵ Min. MMM, I/1765.
- ¹⁶ Min. MMM, II/1765.
- ¹⁷ W. W. H. Davis, The History of Bucks County, Pennsylvania (Doylestown, Pa., 1876), p. 797.

CHAPTER VI
MISCELLANEOUS DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

- ¹ Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Faith and Practice (Phila., 1965), p. 39.
- ² Sydney V. James, A People Among Peoples, pp. 169 ff.
- ³ Ibid., p. 169.
- ⁴ Min. MMM, III/1756, X/1756, III/1762.
- ⁵ Min. MMM, III/1756, X/1756.

- 6 Min. MMM, V/1756, XII/1756.
- 7 Min. MMM, III/1762.
- 8 Min. MMM, III/1762.
- 9 Min. MMM, V/1762.
- 10 Howard H. Brinton, Friends for Three Hundred Years, pp. 140-141.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Min. MMM, VIII/1762.
- 13 Min. MMM, X/1762.
- 14 Min. MMM, II/1759.
- 15 Min. MMM, IV/1759.
- 16 Min. MMM, XI/1757, XII/1757, I/1758, II/1758, III/1758, IV/1758.
- 17 Min. MMM, VII/1760.
- 18 Min. MMM, XI-XII/1760.
- 19 Min. MMM, I-V/1761.
- 20 Min. MMM, VIII-X/1768.
- 21 Min. MMM, II-IV/1761.

CHAPTER VII

THE ROLE OF THE WOMEN'S MEETING IN QUAKER DISCIPLINE

- 1 Sydney V. James, A People Among Peoples, pp. 13-14.
- 2 Min. MWM, IV/1763, VII/1763.
- 3 Min. MWM, XII/1766, I/1767.
- 4 Min. MWM, V/1759, XII/1759, VIII/1763, II/1770.
- 5 Min. MWM, II-III/1770.
- 6 Min. MWM, VIII/1763.
- 7 Min. MWM, V/1761, VI/1761, VIII/1761.
- 8 Min. MWM, IV/1767.

- 9 Min. MWM, IX/1754 - IX/1755.
- 10 Min. MWM, X/1758, X/1759.
- 11 Min. MWM, XI-XII/1760.

CHAPTER VIII
THE PROCEDURE AND SUCCESS IN APPEALS

- 1 Min. MMM, XI/1755.
- 2 Min. MMM, XII/1755.
- 3 Min. MMM, II-III/1756.
- 4 Min. BQM, II/1756, V/1756.
- 5 Min. BQM, V/1756.
- 6 Min. BQM, VIII/1756.
- 7 Min. MWM, III/1757.
- 8 Min. MMM, VII/1757.
- 9 Min. BQM, XI/1757.
- 10 Min. BQM, II/1758.
- 11 Min. BQM, V/1758, VIII/1758.
- 12 Min. PYM, IX/1758.
- 13 Min. BQM, II/1759.
- 14 Min. MWM, X/1763.
- 15 Min. MWM, II/1764, III/1764, IV/1764.
- 16 Min. BQM, V/1764, VIII/1764, XI/1764.
- 17 Min. PYM, IX/1765.
- 18 Min. PYM, X/1766.
- 19 Min. PYM, X/1766.
- 20 Min. PYM, X/1767.
- 21 Min. MMM, V/1766.

- 22 Min. MMM, VI/1766, VII/1766, IX/1766.
- 23 Min. BQM, II/1767, V/1767, VIII/1767.
- 24 Min. BQM, II/1768.
- 25 Min. BQM, VIII/1768.
- 26 Min. BQM, V/1769.
- 27 Min. BQM, VIII/1769.
- 28 Min. PYM, IX/1770.
- 29 Min. MMM, XII/1770.

CHAPTER IX

THE EXPERIENCE OF QUAKER DISCIPLINE IN MIDDLETOWN MEETING

¹ Extant manuscript disownments can be found in Papers of Middletown Monthly Meeting, Vol. 1 (1684-1758), Vol. 2 (1759-1786), (Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pa.).

² Min. MMM, I/1758, XII/1759, X/1760, X/1768.

³ Min. MMM, I/1758, XII/1759, X/1768.

⁴ Min. MMM, II/1758, X/1768.

⁵ Sydney V. James, A Peoples Among Peoples, p. 325.

⁶ Ibid., p. 255.

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